





SCHLAUCH BOTTCHER CONSTRUCTION

THE (BIG) SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR SBC

by Anita R. Paul

WHEN MOST PEOPLE THINK OF Montana they think of mountains covered in snow during the winter and woolly buffalo grazing on endless fields of golden grain in the fall. Some realize that Yellowstone National Park is one of the state's treasures, while others don't have a clue that there are nearly two dozen ghost towns in the state, remnants of once thriving boomtowns developed by gold prospectors in the 1850s.

The Montana of today bears little

resemblance to the historic ghost towns that many vacationers come to visit. Yet the appeal of the state, particularly its western region, is what attracts upwards of thousands of visitors each year for skiing, fishing, horseback riding, hiking, and a host of other outdoor activities. Not to mention that many who visit this pristine land develop a fondness that encourages them to make it their "home on the range." These days, the typical Montana home is a far cry from the modest log cabin homes of the

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MONTANA

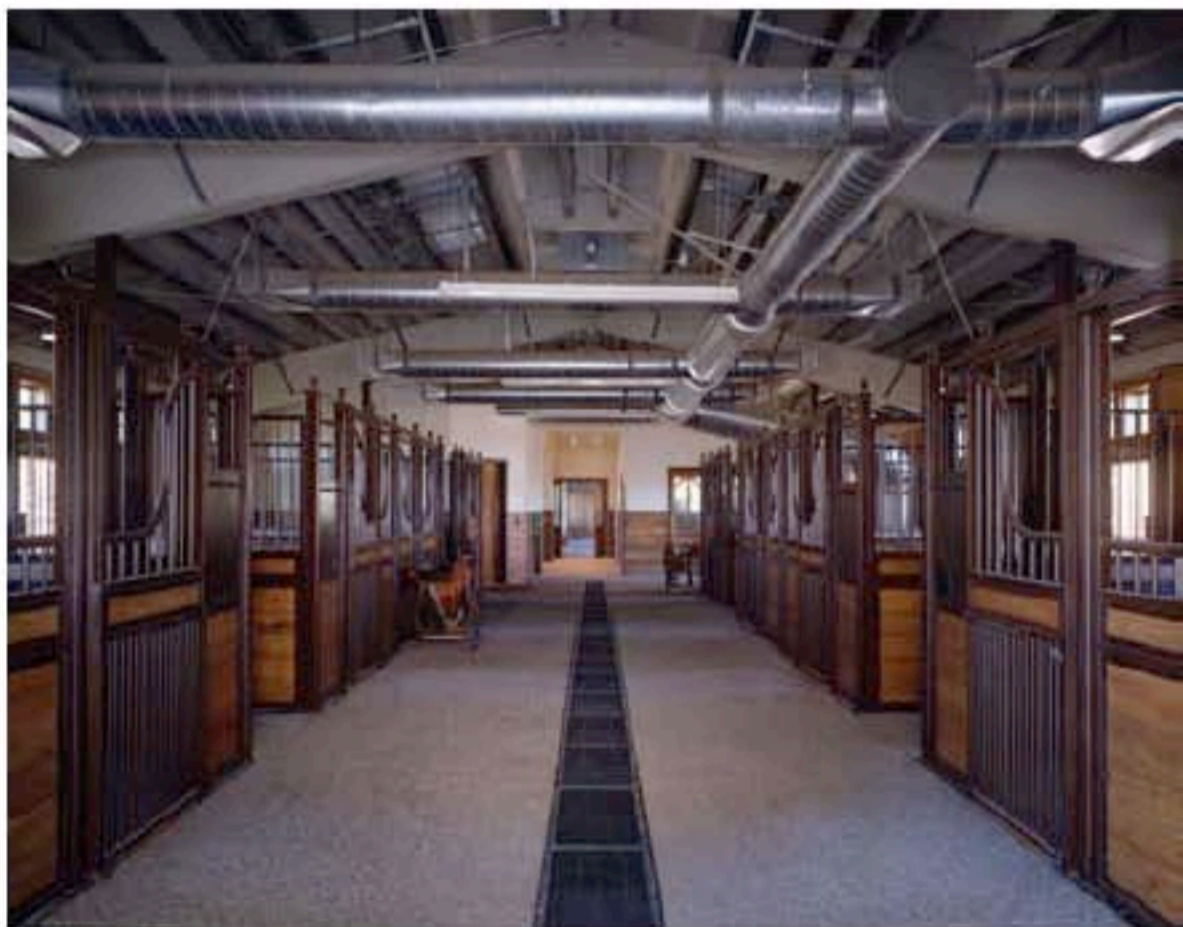
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gold rush days, and home owners are looking for a lot more in a home than sturdy wooden floors and a roof that doesn't leak.

That's a good thing for the partners of Schlauch Bottcher Construction—a foursome of hard-working gentlemen who have found that building dream homes against the backdrop of western Montana's beauty can be far more rewarding than pan-handling for gold in the Gallatin River. The partners of SBC—Michael Schlauch, brothers Jamie and Chad Bottcher, and dad Jim Bottcher—have been in the luxury home construction business for 10 years building high-end custom homes in Big Sky Country. Early on, the team dabbled in commercial work, but quickly found that the custom home space was wide open for growth and offered a myriad of opportunities for them to create works of art of which they could truly be proud. After a decade in the building business, revenues have reached upwards of \$30 million annually, and yearly production of new homes has leveled off at about a dozen for the past few years.

"We have building in our blood," says Jamie Bottcher. That love for the business of building is what has led Schlauch Bottcher Construction, or SBC, to become one of the most sought-after builders in its market, constructing custom homes that range in cost from \$500,000 to over \$10 million. Thanks to the popularity of the area, with its wide-open spaces, relatively clean air, and family-fun atmosphere, the residential construction market has gained in strength over the past half-decade. And with a large number of baby boomers purchasing second and third homes or vacation homes, the market for custom luxury homes is moving in a positive direction.

Overall, the custom home market isn't driven by interest rates, as is the general new home market. Therefore, consumers with cash in their coffers



are much less concerned about rising mortgage interest rates, and more focused on quality construction, unique design, and long-term investment appreciation. These home owners are building for the long haul and typically intend to remain in the custom home for several years to several decades.

What SBC's clients appreciate most is the flexibility the company offers when it comes to the construction of the home. The builders come to the table as early as possible in the process to meet with architects, designers, and other key contributors to ensure they understand what the client wants and to share their expertise on how to make it happen. "We try to let each client's house speak for who they are," says Jamie. "It's not just an SBC home; we want the client to be pleased with the end result. It should have their signature."

A MESSAGE FROM CUSTOM II METAL FABRICATION

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That personalized signature is what makes a house a home, and the partners at SBC are willing to customize the home to whatever specifications the client chooses. Some of the trends SBC has found to be popular of late include the use of relics, unique woodwork, antique doors, and columns as part of the design of the home. Other high-end, high-tech luxuries to hit the marketplace include state-of-the-art security systems and media rooms that accommodate large-screen televisions, projectors, and theatre-style reclining seats. These types of features initially made a big splash in the home remodeling business, and are now options that custom home clients are building into their specs.

To help ensure none of the details are overlooked in the planning process, SBC has a focused approach to beginning new projects. "We get to know the client and get involved as early as possible in the design process so we can offer input and advice," states Chad Bottcher. "We make sure we're all on the same page." SBC finds that building relationships with the architect, the designer, and the client helps the project run more smoothly from concept to completion. "Our reward is getting the house done and having a drink on the deck with a happy owner," says Chad.

But that's not the only acknowledgement of a job well done that SBC has received. Over the years the company has been honored with numerous awards—2006 Home of the Year by Mountain Living Magazine; The Award of Merit from Estates West Magazine Gold Nugget Awards 2006; Best in American Living Award, Custom Home Builder Magazine; and they were the builders of a home that's architect received the American Institute of Architects Housing Award, to name a few. But when it's all said and done, "A great measure of success is seeing things evolve and start to click. Seeing the finished project and being

**A MESSAGE FROM
YOOPER WALL SYSTEMS**

Owner Chad Ouellette has been in the drywall industry for 20 years, and founded his company, Yooper Wall Systems, Inc. in 1994. The company offers its customers a complete wall systems package. Not only do they offer quality installation and texturing of drywall, they specialize in a variety of interior finish plaster and exterior stucco. Yooper Wall Systems, Inc. is proud and gratified to be a part of the Schlauch Bottcher Construction team. They have formed a relationship upon a solid reputation for dependability and quality of work.

able to say, 'We did that!'" says Mike Schlauch.

To get to that level of success takes a committed team of employees, craftsmen, and subcontractors who operate with the same philosophy and commitment to quality as the company's owners. The partners of SBC believe they have found just the right combination of people to get the job done. But growing from a company of four to 124 didn't come without some growing pains. "As you grow and your responsibilities increase you have to balance your strengths and let someone else shine to do what's best for the company," says Jamie.

The guys admit that it was tough in the beginning. But they have learned through trial and error that growth requires increased responsibilities, some restructuring of their positions, and continuous change, along with letting go the reins to allow team members to shine. "The secret to our

success is having good employees," says Schlauch.

Now, the company relies on a handful of individuals to manage some aspects of the building processes, taking pressure off the partners so they can manage other areas of the business, including the daily operations of a concrete company, a trucking company, a timber recycling company, and a property caretaking/concierge company.

To keep the team engaged and the momentum going, SBC is constantly looking for the next project. And they have found it in a new development called The Ameya Preserve, taking shape in the Paradise Valley area south of Livingston, Montana. A sustainable development with a maximum of 300 homes that will share 11,000 acres of open space with deeply embedded environmental values and a community focused on amenities in the arts and sciences. SBC won the bid

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for construction management on the development, which will have a main lodge, nature center, fishing lodge, observatory, equestrian facilities, over 60 miles of hiking trails, several water features and wildlife management facilities, in addition to several community centers that will welcome artists and musicians in residence and a renowned chef and culinary institute, creating a community unlike any seen in western Montana.

Taking on a project of this magnitude is certainly something to be proud of. But the partners at SBC take it all in stride and see it as just part of the growth process. As Chad Bottcher says, "Like the saying goes, 'If you aren't growing, you're dying.'" ^{ASQ}

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